

MACHINIST

Not Just An Ordinary Job

Edison, Bell, Wright: common household names of inventors who have had a tremendous impact on our daily lives. Can you imagine Edison, Bell, or Wright handing you a crude drawing on a slip of paper and asking you to come up with the first working telephone or phonograph or airplane engine? That is what happened to John Kruesi, the machinist who built Edison's phonograph. Thomas Watson is the machinist credited with developing the first telephone from Bell's ideas and to whom Alexander Graham Bell spoke those first words, "Mr. Watson, come here. I want to see you." Another machinist, Charles Taylor, built the first aircraft engine for the Wrights' airplane. Each of these machinists helped inventors bring their far-fetched ideas from dream to reality and the names of Edison, Bell and Wright into the history books.


The U.S. Department of Labor defines a machinist as one who uses machine tools, such as lathes, milling machines, and shop drawings to produce or repair precision metal parts and instruments. Many new machines now use lasers, water jets, electrified wires or computer numerically controlled (CNC) machines to form parts. Reading blueprints, setting up machines, making cuts or boring holes, monitoring the feed and speed of the machines are just a few of the processes a machinist performs. Some machinists also write CNC programs for the machines they operate.

So, if you are interested in mechanics, mathematics, metal properties and machining procedures and see yourself being part of an occupation with a rich past and a bright future, how do you become a machinist? Training for this occupation is considered long-term since it will take more than 12 months to complete. It consists of apprenticeship programs where a sponsoring employer trains you on-the-job (and often pays you at the same time,) and vocational/technical schools or community colleges which offer associate degrees. Most machinists have been trained through a combination of on-the-job and classroom experience. Check with the Utah Office of Apprenticeship at (801) 975-3650 or www.utahtraining.org for detailed apprenticeship information.

Based on recently published data for the metro Salt Lake area, an inexperienced machinist earns \$12.13 an hour. The median wage is \$17.45. This is a five-star occupation,

meaning that machinists have a strong employment outlook and high wages.

Business growth, rather than the need for replacements, will make up the majority of new job openings in Utah. With a projected 27.9 percent increase over the decade, this occupation will grow faster than average.

A machinist is quoted as saying, "Machinists make engineers look good." And inventors, too, it seems. 

Projected Job Growth For Machinists 2004-2014

Area	Current Employment	Projected Employment	Total Annual Openings
Utah	3,690	4,720	190
Utah Metro	2,836	3,641	147
Utah Non-Metro	642	823	33
U.S.	370,000	386,000	10,000

Source: Utah Department of Workforce Services.





Machinists make
engineers look good...
and inventors, too.